

The background of the page features a large, faint watermark of the Nigerian coat of arms. It consists of a central red eagle with its wings spread, perched on a shield. The shield is supported by two white horses facing outwards. Below the shield is a green wreath with red flowers, and at the bottom, a yellow banner with the motto 'UNITY AND FAITH, PEACE AND PROGRESS'.

TIT-BITS

Vol. 96

LAGOS CALABAR COASTAL HIGHWAY U-TURN: SOCIO ECONOMIC IMPACTS

TOLG

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF

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In April 2024, news sources reported on demolitions for the initial phase of the Lagos-Calabar coastal highway project. However, the project has taken a detour recently. Despite acquiring land, displacing and demolishing businesses, the project has been halted on a specific stretch due to concerns raised in the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA). The Federal Government have now decided to revert to the original alignment of the highway between kilometres 16 to 25.

The situation raises concerns about communication and planning as businesses face uncertainty, and the project's overall timeline remains unclear. The Proposed routes of the highway realignment were set to pass through ecologically sensitive areas. The lack of proper EIA also meant insufficient planning for the socio-economic impacts of the project. Many communities/businesses along the proposed route have been displaced without adequate resettlement plans or compensation.

This episode emphasizes the importance of prioritizing robust EIAs before significant actions are taken. Proper EIA procedures require extensive public consultations and stakeholder engagement. Nigeria's environmental laws mandate comprehensive EIAs for large-scale projects. The government's failure to adhere to these regulations not only undermines legal frameworks but also sets a dangerous precedent for future infrastructural developments. This non-compliance has been a point of legal contention and public outcry, highlighting the need for stricter enforcement and adherence to environmental laws.

The recent decision to revert to the original alignment underscores the initial failure to conduct thorough EIA checks. The necessity to protect critical infrastructure like submarine cables and power plants was only realized after initial plans had progressed, indicating that these factors were not adequately considered from the outset. This reassessment, although necessary, reflects poorly on the initial planning and assessment stages of the project.

Hopefully, Nigeria can navigate future infrastructure projects with greater sustainability and social equity. The federal government's failure in running proper EIA checks for the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway Project illustrates significant procedural lapses and regulatory non-compliance. This oversight not only jeopardizes environmental and social sustainability but also erodes public trust in the government's ability to manage large-scale infrastructure projects responsibly.
